

SECRETARY KISSINGER'S REMARKS AT USUN
RE LAW OF THE SEA

file
NY

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Thursday, April 8, 1976
7:30 p.M.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Ladies and gentlemen, I wanted to, first of all, thank you all for accepting our invitation. The purpose of my visit to New York is to emphasize the great importance that the United States attaches to the negotiations that are now going on regarding the law of the seas. We live in a world in which many of the problems affect all of mankind. We also live in a world in which the relationship between the developed and the developing nations must be solved on a constructive and cooperative basis.

The United States at the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly expressed this philosophy; and on the seas, covering 70 percent of the world's surface, all of us here have a unique opportunity to realize a global cooperation to which, in fact, there is no practical alternative. If we do not succeed in these negotiations, then each nation will proceed on its own. It will lead to endless controversy with respect to the definition of economic zones, their extent, and after enormous conflict we will still have to come to an agreement.

With respect to the deep seabeds, if we do not come to an agreement, the technologically most advanced nations will gain a great

unilateral advantage.

Now, again, the United States has nothing to fear from that sort of a competition; but if we look ahead into the future, then we realize that under such conditions a violent form of competition is inevitable and that under those conditions the poorest nations, the landlocked nations, will be at a severe disadvantage. And under those conditions too we cannot take care of the legitimate and understandable concerns of commodity producers, of land-based commodity producers.

So the United States believes very strongly that we are so close to an agreement that we must make a special effort to achieve success.

Today I have made some proposals in a public speech that had the primary purpose, first, of underlining that the political level of the United States Government is behind the dedicated work that you ladies and gentlemen are doing, and, secondly, to make some specific suggestions of how to move forward and suggestions that reflect a considerable effort within our Government.

As you all know, since we are now getting to be the only government in which the classification system is used to call the attention of the press to significant papers (laughter), there is not total unanimity within the United States Government, for example, with respect to commodity agreements or with respect to limitations on production on the deep seabed.

So if you understand that context, I hope you agree with me that we have made a significant effort and we have attempted to move forward.

As I understand it, the work in the three Commissions is proceeding not necessarily at an even pace but there is some hope that we can begin to focus on some texts by the end of this Conference.

We believe very much that there should be a second session this year and that we should all dedicate ourselves to making the second session the final session. I fear that if we do not complete the treaty this year that the national legislations are going to proliferate, that the problem of adjudicating the disputes will become unmanageable, that nations will begin to stake out their claims on the deep seabed and that we will see on the ocean side a competition of the sort of rivalry that produced wars throughout the Nineteenth Century and that this great opportunity of cooperative work by the developed and the developing nations will be lost.

I want to assure you that the United States Government at its highest level is dedicated to working cooperatively with you. It makes no sense for us to ram unacceptable proposals down your throats. We want a regime of the oceans that enjoys a wide international consensus, and we hope that we will be greeted by your delegation that

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that while, of course, there are differences of opinion, the United States recognizes that foreigners cannot be right all the time. (Laughter.)

But, seriously, while there are differences of opinion, serious work is proceeding. The disagreements seem to us manageable. We will not ask that the concessions all be made by others. We will look at reasonable concerns in a serious manner.

And my primary purpose here is not to give a technical talk on all of the subjects that are before you, primarily because I would be violating one of the cardinal rules of the Department of State -- which is that the Secretary of State must be ignorant (laughter) of all the technical matters, and I do not want to demoralize Ambassador Learson and his staff who have succeeded in keeping me in that position. (Laughter.)

But I'm not here to go into all of the technical details. I'm here to tell you that we are dedicated to succeeding; that at our political level we are following this conference; we are prepared to work with the political levels of your countries if the issues become intractable on a technical level; that we will listen with goodwill to your proposals. And I believe that if this treaty achieved that all of you who are here can take pride in having participated in one of the most historic achievements of mankind, and that will make all your hard work worthwhile.

So good luck.